

VZCZCXRO1016  
RR RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV RUEHSR  
DE RUEHRL #0636/01 0661627  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
R 071627Z MAR 06  
FM AMEMBASSY BERLIN  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1930  
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE  
RUCNFRG/FRG COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BERLIN 000636

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/08/2021  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [GM](#)  
SUBJECT: OPPOSITION TO SCRUTINIZE BND ROLE IN IRAQ

Classified By: DCM John Cloud. Reason: 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) The FDP's Bundestag caucus voted March 6 to establish a parliamentary investigatory committee to look into the activities of the German intelligence service (BND) in Iraq and in relation to terror suspects held by the U.S. Since the caucuses of the Greens and Left Party.PDS had already taken similar action, the Bundestag opposition now has enough votes to form the committee. Before that can happen, however, the three parties must agree on the committee's terms of reference. This will not be an easy task as each of the parties has different reasons for wanting an investigation.

-----  
Not a Done Deal  
-----

2, The FDP's stated goal for creating an investigatory committee is to expose alleged hypocrisy at the highest levels of the Schroeder-Fischer government, apparently with the aim of weakening the Greens. The Left Party.PDS also seeks to focus on the role of policy-level officials, but would not limit itself to questioning members of the previous government. Its aim is to weaken Germany's ties to the U.S. The Greens, on the other hand, would like to limit the committee's mandate to studying the BND's reporting from Baghdad and its liaison activities with U.S., thereby avoiding scrutiny of former Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer's involvement. The three parties will meet on March 7 for what most commentators believe will be drawn-out negotiations on the committee's terms of reference.

-----  
Possible Personnel Repercussions  
-----

¶3. (C) The most senior political target of an investigation now in government is Foreign Minister Steinmeier. As Chief of Staff to Chancellor Schroeder, he was by all accounts directly involved in shaping and monitoring the implementation of Germany's policy on Iraq. Steinmeier would be vulnerable to possible revelations that the former government had deliberately distorted or concealed aspects of its Iraq policy for domestic political reasons. BND chief Ernst Uhrlau (formerly Schroeder's intelligence coordinator) and Interior Ministry State Secretary August Hanning (former head of the BND) could also be implicated.

¶4. (C) Such revelations would also hurt the Greens, a party that claims transparency, multilateralism and opposition to the Iraq War were the hallmarks of its foreign policy under Fischer. The image of the Foreign Office under his management was already damaged last spring when the Bundestag investigated the security implications of its liberal visa issuance policy. Although Fischer has withdrawn from politics and can no longer be directly harmed by an

investigation, the Greens admit that damage to his reputation would hurt them.

15. (C) Beyond Foreign Minister Steinmeier, Uhrlau, and Hanning damage to other sitting government figures is likely to be limited. The investigation will not help the struggling Social Democrats to recover political standing, perhaps thereby putting strains on the delicate balance within the coalition. In addition, there has been some criticism of the Merkel government for failing to be fully transparent in its reports to the Bundestag's intelligence oversight committee (PKG). While the Left Party.PDS might try to make this an issue, the Greens' reluctance to scrutinize policy-level officials and the FDP's desire to avoid collateral damage to intelligence cooperation with Germany's allies place limits on demands for full disclosure.

-----  
Possible Impact on German-U.S. Relations  
-----

16. (C) The focus of media and political interest in the story has shifted away from the U.S. and allegations about the abduction of a German citizen, possible rendition flights through Ramstein Air Force Base and alleged secret interrogation facilities in Eastern Europe. Instead, attention is now directed at the BND and its alleged role in reporting from Baghdad during the Iraq War and in interviewing German terror suspects held by the U.S. and others. Many contacts tell us the story has now reached a level of complexity that the public finds baffling. We see no evidence so far that this has further weakened the public perception of the United States in Germany, and FDP contacts tell us they do not think this will happen. That could be overly optimistic. The Greens and the Left Party.PDS both

BERLIN 00000636 002 OF 002

want to raise the U.S. angle as much as possible, albeit for different reasons: for the Greens it serves as a diversionary tactic; for the PDS it supports a basic tenet of their foreign policy.

17. (C) Officials in the Chancellery, Foreign Office and Interior Ministry have candidly expressed concern about the impact investigatory committee revelations could have on Germany's ability to share intelligence with its allies in the future. They are concerned because investigatory committee sessions are generally open to the media and the public. When government officials need to provide classified testimony, subcommittees are established and testimony is taken in closed sessions. Inevitably, classified testimony gets leaked -- yet another reason for the current concern in government circles. Unless and until the three opposition parties can agree on the terms of reference for the committee, it is difficult for us to judge whether these concerns are justified.

TIMKEN JR